



April 2015

# 'Care Share

## ***Drug Diversion***

*According to the Congressional Budget Office, the Federal Government spent \$62 billion on prescription drugs in 2010. Drug diversion, or the redirection of prescription drugs for illegitimate purposes, takes a portion of Medicare and Medicaid funds away from legitimate care.*

Office of Inspector General (OIG) investigations of drug diversion are on the rise.

In many of the cases that OIG investigates, health care providers such as physicians or pharmacists participate in drug diversion schemes. Some of these providers have written hundreds or thousands of unlawful, medically unnecessary prescriptions which were then billed to Medicare.

One area of concern is prescription shorting. This is where a fraudulent pharmacy routinely dispenses prescriptions a few pills short. In a large prescription the pharmacist hopes the beneficiary will not notice. If the pharmacist does this repeatedly, the pharmacy can steal a lot of money from Medicare or Medicaid because they are billed for the full amount.

In a similar scheme, a fraudulent pharmacy may fill a partial month's drug supply and ask the beneficiary to come back for the rest. The pharmacist then bills twice in one month for the full amount.

A new prescription drug diversion tactic is to talk a beneficiary into getting a prescription from his physician for a

narcotic. It is then filled and billed to Medicare or Medicaid. The beneficiary is then paid cash for the script and the drugs are cycled back through the pharmacy or sold on the street.

To bring this home, two people in trusted positions as a physical therapist and a physical therapy assistant had been going into homes for months, maybe even years, stealing prescription pain pills in Scobey Montana. In some instances, the stolen pills were replaced with lookalike Tylenol pills.

Most providers in Montana are honest, however it only takes one bad apple, one caregiver, to replace your medication with lookalikes, or steal a small amount that you may not even notice.

In September U.S. District Judge Susan P. Watters sentenced, 32-year-old Criswell and Handran, 33, to four years of federal probation for conspiring to steal prescription pain pills from 91 of their physical therapy patients during a 14-month period in 2011 and 2012.

*The Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) helps to educate Medicare beneficiaries about ways to prevent, detect, and combat Medicare fraud. For more information about Medicare fraud, visit the Stop Medicare Fraud website at [www.stopmedicarefraud.gov](http://www.stopmedicarefraud.gov).*

## Keep your prescriptions safe

- Lock them up
- Don't keep them in obvious places if you can, such as the medicine cabinet
- If in vehicle keep the vehicle locked and in secure location
- Know what prescriptions you have and the quantities and keep a medication log!
- Address potential abuse with yourself or friends and/family immediately
- Dispose of them properly



## Protect, Detect, Report: Stopping healthcare fraud is in your hands

The number one deterrent to healthcare waste, fraud and abuse, continues to be you, the beneficiary.

Use the tools provided for free by SMP to track your medical bills. Medicare processes 4.5 million claims a day. This means you are the only one who will know if you did see a doctor or not.

A woman in Iowa questioned a \$9.19 charge billed on her MSN that appeared twice and it resulted in \$1.37 million being returned to Medicare because it was a mistake on everyone's MSN in the state that year. Another example is where a doctor billed Medicare every day except for Christmas during a three year period, taking in \$1.2 million. He received over \$100,000 for one client alone who he actually only saw once.

Anyone reading their statement would've seen services from him they didn't receive. Medicare may find \$1.2 million in fraud, but investigating and prosecuting costs money, plus factor in the thief does not have all of

that money sitting in the bank to return in case they get caught.

**Stopping it at the beneficiary level before it even becomes \$500 is the key.**

Also, Medical identity theft occurs when someone steals your personal information (like your name, Social Security number, or Medicare number) to obtain medical care, buy drugs, or submit fake billings to Medicare in your name. Medical identity theft can disrupt your life, damage your credit rating, and waste taxpayer dollars. The damage can be life-threatening to you if wrong information ends up in your personal medical records.

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